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PLEASURES OF LITERATURE  
AND THE SOLACE OF BOOKS

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JOSEPH SHALER

## A BOOK.

EMILY DICKINSON.

He ate and drank the precious words  
His spirit grew robust;  
He knew no more that he was poor,  
Nor that his frame was dust.  
He danced along the dingy days,  
And this bequest of wings  
Was but a book. What liberty  
A loosened spirit brings!





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THE PLEASURES  
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## PREFACE

It may occur to some who read these extracts, that no adequate reason can be advanced for making this selection, as the work has been so exhaustively carried out by Mr. Alexander Ireland in his *Booklover's Enchiridion*.

As a monument of industrial research that work stands unrivaled, and is in itself a library of reference for much that has been said about books. Mr. Ireland's volume is not, however, convenient for easy reading or well suited for the pocket. It was therefore thought that lovers of books would welcome a volume containing a short selection of pertinent extracts which would answer to these requirements. Another reason for its existence is the growing interest taken in books, and also the fact that during recent years some of our great statesmen and men of letters have written and said many things about books which are well worth detaching from their surroundings and including amongst other gems from some of our masters

in English literature. Carlyle has said that " Literature is the thought of thinking minds " ; and every student of literature knows how completely true is this remark. If the perusal of these extracts should stimulate the mind of either book-worm or book-butterfly one object with which the compilation was undertaken will have been attained. It is, however, hoped that a higher result will follow ; that of directing readers to the sources from which these gems have been obtained, where they may drink in deeply the thoughts which flow from master-minds, and which in their supply know no exhaustion.

The warmest and most sincere thanks of the compiler are given to the various authors from whose works these selections are taken, but special acknowledgment is here made to the Right Hon. Lord Rosebery, the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, the Right Hon. G. J. Goschen ; to Mr. Sidney Lee and Mr. Henry N. Stevens for their courtesy and consent, also to Messrs. Bickers & Son for the extracts from Matthew Arnold and the Right Hon. John Morley, to Mr. George Allen for the selection from Mr. Ruskin,

to Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton for that by Dean Farrar, and to Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for those by Sir John Lubbock and Mr. Frederic Harrison. Should there, however, be any author from whose works an extract has been taken and not specially acknowledged, I hope this general recognition of indebtedness will be deemed a sufficient expression of my gratitude.

JOSEPH SHALER.





All these things here collected are not mine,  
But divers grapes make but one kind of wine,  
So I from many learned authors took  
The various matters written in this book;  
What's not mine own shall not by me be father'd,  
The most part I in many years have gather'd.

*John Taylor the Water-Poet,*  
1580-1654.



# INTRODUCTION

BY ANDREW LANG

“FOR the sins of the learned,” says Swift, or Arbuthnot, “Heaven permitted the invention of Printing.” In the following volume, Mr. Arthur Balfour, in a vein of paradox, doubts whether the invention of printing is to be regretted. In my poor opinion, it has proved a great blow to Literature. Nobody can maintain that printing has produced greater poets, or philosophers, or historians, than they who wrote when books were confined to manuscript. Homer, the Greek Tragedians, Herodotus, Thucydides, Lucretius, Simonides, Virgil, Plato, Tacitus, Catullus, Horace, have not been surpassed, while the Prophets of Israel remain unique, as do the authors of the Gospels and the Psalms. All wrote many centuries before Heaven permitted the invention of Printing. All had a sufficient audience, and what more was required?

People who deserved to be able to read, did read, and now that every one can read, few

people deserve to do so, for few go beyond a newspaper. It is but a small minority who even aspire to study a novel. What is the result? The result is that authors endeavour to reach that vast public which, in no age and in no country, has cared for the pleasures of literature. We hear it said of a book that it does not appeal to a man on an omnibus, or to a man lunching in a public-house. That condemns a book, therefore authors debase their wares, to captivate indolent women, and the man on the omnibus.

Bad books are multiplied, tares are deliberately sown, the good seed is choked, the rare good books are lost among the weeds, like wheat obscured by flamboyant poppies.

The great and good men who supply many of the passages in this collection, were honestly thanking Heaven and good writers for good books. They were trying, also, to lure the public by praise, to partake of the pleasures of the literature which is excellent. The great public is not to be tempted, for, of all the arts, Literature is least to the general taste of the world.

"A book in a nook," *libellus in angulo*, was the desire of Thomas à Kempis: it is not the world's desire. True reading demands seclusion, leisure, freedom from the crowd; and the great world, in all classes, is "gregarious." It confesses that it "has not time to read." Its time is devoted to seeking crowds; even music, the play, pictures, can be enjoyed in a crowd. Not so literature; the reading man or woman is not, like the world, gregarious.

We readers are a little flock, scattered sparsely about the land, some in London, several in Glasgow, two or three, perhaps, in such a thriving village as Dundee. We are not gregarious; for the gregarious there are plays, operas, the Royal Academy, and lectures. The man or woman who reads is at the opposite pole from those who go to lectures. *They* never read, they expect to take literature in "through the pores," and among a crowd.

The Greeks were of a like mind. You do not come on praises of books, as you turn over the *exemplaria Græca*. That famous people went to the play, went to Recitations, went to Lectures, but did not read books any more than

does our general public. Their very word for reading meant, literally, "reading aloud." I don't remember any Greek praises of reading (not aloud) before a very late age, but Cicero is eloquent on the topic: he is usually quoted on the pleasures of literary study.

The great students, Dean Farrar, Mr. Arthur Balfour, Mr. Hain Friswell, Bacon, and others cited in this work, remind me, when they praise books, of boys who are in the water, on a chilly day. "Come in, you fellows," they cry, "it's awfully jolly." They express themselves much more eloquently; they say charming things about literature. Books lighten anxiety; books convey counsel; books make dark days sunny; books instruct; books "have the key of the happy golden land," the Open Sesame of romance. The authors are our friends, who do not bore us. "My days among the dead are passed," cries Southey, "Around me I behold, Where e'er these casual eyes are cast The mighty minds of old." It is all very true, but the public, like Mr. Huckleberry Finn, "takes no stock in dead people," does not care a dime for the mighty minds of old. In fact, as we splash

about in the sea of letters, and cry, "Come in, it's awfully jolly," the wise world goes bicycling, or has some beer, or talks of politics or society. The lady in Mr. Mallock's satire justly distrusted persons who talk about books: "it looks as if they did not know any people to talk about." We address an inattentive population. Mankind, as a rule, detests literature.

"What another damned great volume, always writing, writing, Mr. Gibbon," said a Royal Duke, very gracefully, to the author of *The Decline and Fall*. The Stuarts were reading men: even Charles, Prince of Wales over the water, was a bibliophile. James I. was a poet, James V. was no better, James VI. was a book-worm; Charles I. was a collector; James VII., in the opinion of Lord Wolseley and the Duke of Wellington, was the most lucid of writers on military subjects. Hence the unpopularity of the Stuarts. Now the House of Hanover (in the last century) exactly suited us Britons. George III., brought up as a kind of Jacobite, had literary tastes; so had George IV. The Duke of Sussex, a friend of Cardinal York,

was a book collector. Her Majesty is herself an author. The *early* Georges did not read.

“Another damned great volume, Mr. Gibbon!”, thus does the English world salute an author, to the present day. A reader has a kind of freemasonry, like an angler, which enables him to detect other readers everywhere. Thus I have found comrades among game-keepers and gillies, and viscountesses, and *grandes dames de par le monde*, who quote Donne at dinner-parties. Marquises are often bookish, and I have heard, at first hand, of an omnibus-driver who read Plato in Mr. Jowett’s translation. Soldiers read a good deal, not so actors, school-masters, or college dons, a race of men remarkable for ignorance outside of their speciality. Barristers “have no time to read.” Judges read novels, reviewers read nothing. They have not time.

Do I blame my fellow-creatures? In no wise, but I do not hope to convert them. They are naturally human; I am one of a small race of abnormal creatures, known to science as bookworms. From babyhood, almost, I was acquainted with the word “bookworm,” and

endured the contempt of mankind. “*My* days among the dead were passed,” with Bruce and Wallace, the Fat Knight and Mercutio, Aladdin and Colonel Henry Esmond, and Baron of Smailholme and Michael Scott the wizard. Society reproved, and endeavoured to correct me. “Why did I not play with the other boys?” (at cricket I *did*, of course), and like Sir Walter I might have said, “You can’t think how ignorant these boys are.” This remark I repressed: it was the only priggish saying recorded of Scott, and was uttered about the age of five. But society did not convert me from my taste (the chief pleasure of a long and laborious existence) nor shall I ever attempt to convert Society. We readers dwell apart:

“We are like children reared in shade  
Within some old-world abbey wall,  
Forgotten in a forest glade,  
And secret from the eyes of all.”

The world could not wag on, if we were all bookworms. “Muscles make the man, Not mind, or that confounded intellect.” Some persons are born to prefer existence at second hand, glorified in the dreams of poets, sages,

romancers, wits. There is better company, for such people, in a shelf of books, than at the Club, or at a rout, or in the public-house. It suits us better to hear Mr. Stevenson, or Montaigne, or Coleridge, or Hazlitt, than to listen to such talk as is common enough. It is a taste like another: it cannot be taught or communicated: you cannot preach or lecture men and women into a love of good letters. The world is fundamentally hostile to literature, in great part because the world is gregarious, and literature is a solitary pursuit. Much may be said against it, as unfitting men for life, though some of the greatest readers, Cicero, Napoleon, Scott, Macaulay, Mr. Gladstone, have been stirring personages. But there are plenty of people to carry on this business of life. Let us read unreprieved!

The spirit of these remarks I find rebuked, whenever I turn from literature to authorship, and study *The Author*. In that great commercial organ, among the most eloquent remarks on discount, I seem to find traces of optimism, traces of belief in a great literary public. I do not believe in any such thing, even if some

novels, at six shillings, find a market for 100,000 copies. Even that (considering how bad most of these books are, how ignorant, coarse, emphatic, and illiterate) is relatively a very small demand. Think of the millions of England, and think of how many of them buy a book, say, of an author who is a man of genius, and "popular," Mr. Kipling or Mr. Stevenson. What a beggarly account! As for those who read Marlowe, or Montaigne, they are the tiniest of remnants.

The public hates to spend money on books. A correspondent, writing from a college in a populous part of the country, favored me to-day with some useful remarks on a special subject which I had treated. He did so on the strength of reviews; it would be long enough before the book in question came his way, he said, and he wrote from a College! He had not the least faith in the acquisition of a book by the library of his College. (After writing this, I learn that the "College" is *not* a college, but the tale is too good to be lost!) This is typical of the English attitude towards literature. In large public libraries with good endowments, if no

minion is kept to cut the leaves open, hundreds of books, famous books, remain uncut. I have myself cut pages of a century old, and the book, in this instance, was a classic. Education has not increased, I believe it has diminished, the number of readers of anything more abstruse than the last novel whose author had noisy backers. Perhaps Education has not directly caused the diminution in the number of students. The increased facilities for gregarious hurry have helped, and the number of journals which tell people (often quite erroneously) just as much about a book as will satisfy an easy curiosity, assist in keeping down literature. Circulating libraries lend their aid, by "sitting tight," when a book is asked for, by not supplying it, and by waiting till the public have forgotten the subject. They do not need to wait long.

The indifference, or hostility, to reading is human, natural, and has always existed. In many obvious ways, modern life aids and confirms the natural hostility and indifference. But we bookish beings are not actually persecuted, after our childhood is over. Penal laws on study are not passed and enforced. We are

more happily situated than Catholics under Elizabeth, Presbyterians under Charles II., or Scottish Episcopalians under Queen Anne or George II. We are not even forbidden to proselytize, and to win sheep into our narrow fold. This collection of wise sayings on the pleasures of letters may here and there convert a soul, though, as I have said, I conceive that we must be born to love books, and to inherit citizenship in the Republic of Letters. If so, the text will, at least, confirm a faith founded in grace, and bestowed freely on the elect of the Muses. This doctrine, then, is a kind of literary Calvinism. These are lost souls who read to be in the fashion, mere empty professors, sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. They waste their hypocrisy, for it is decidedly not in the fashion to be bookish,—or only in “the highest circles.”





## LIST OF AUTHORS QUOTED

---

	PAGE
ADDISON, Joseph . . . . .	25
Arnold, Matthew . . . . .	27
Arnold, Thomas . . . . .	28
Aungerville, Bishop . . . . .	30
Bacon, Francis, Lord Verulam . . . . .	31
Balfour, Right Hon. A. J. . . . .	32
Baxter, Richard . . . . .	37
Bayard, Hon. T. F. . . . .	39
Beaconsfield, Lord. . . . .	40
Beaumont, F., and J. Fletcher . . . . .	42
Bright, John . . . . .	43
Cameron, Rev. A . . . . .	46
Carlyle, Thomas . . . . .	47
Channing, Dr. W. E. . . . .	49
Chapin, Dr. . . . .	51
Corbett, W. . . . .	79
Coleridge, S. T. . . . .	53
Collier, Jeremy . . . . .	54
Colton, C. C. . . . .	82
Dawson, George . . . . .	56
De Bury, Richard . . . . .	57
De Genlis, Madame . . . . .	59
D'Israeli, Isaac . . . . .	60

	PAGE
Emerson, R. W. . . . .	64
Farrar, Dean . . . . .	65
Fénélon, F. . . . .	45
Friswell, J. H. . . . .	68
Fuller, Thomas . . . . .	29
Gladstone, Right Hon. W. E. . . . .	69
Godwin, William . . . . .	38, 71
Goldsmith, Oliver . . . . .	73
Goschen, Right Hon. G. J. . . . .	74
Harrison, Frederic. . . . .	77
Hazlitt, William . . . . .	80
Helps, Sir Arthur . . . . .	83
Herschel, Sir John. . . . .	87
Holmes, Dr. O. W. . . . .	88
Hood, Paxton . . . . .	55
Hood, Thomas . . . . .	89
Horace . . . . .	90
Houghton, Lord . . . . .	90
Iddesleigh, Earl of. . . . .	91
Irving, Washington . . . . .	92
Johnson, Dr. S. . . . .	52
Jonson, Ben . . . . .	94
Kingsley, Charles . . . . .	95
Lamb, Charles . . . . .	96

# List of Authors

23

Landor, W. S. . . . .	26
Langford, J. A. . . . .	97
Lee, Sidney . . . . .	99
Locke, John . . . . .	101
Lubbock, Sir John . . . . .	103
Lytton, Lord . . . . .	104
Lytton, Lord (Owen Meredith) . . . . .	105
Macaulay, Lord . . . . .	106
Mahon, Lord . . . . .	109
Miller, Rev. J. R. . . . .	112
Milton, John . . . . .	114
Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley . . . . .	76
Montesquieu, C. . . . .	100
Morley, John, Right Hon. . . . .	116
Parker, Theodore . . . . .	120
Pattison, Mark . . . . .	121
Petrarch, Francesco . . . . .	123
Plato . . . . .	98
Richardson, C. F. . . . .	125
Rosebery, Lord . . . . .	128
Ruskin, John. . . . .	132
Schopenhauer, A. . . . .	134
Steele, Sir R. . . . .	48
Stevens, Henry . . . . .	137
Swift, Dean . . . . .	58
Thoreau, H. D. . . . .	138
Voltaire, F. M. A. . . . .	67



## The Pleasures of Literature

As the Supreme Being has expressed, and as it were printed His ideas in the creation, men express their ideas in books, which by this great invention of these latter ages may last as long as the sun and moon, and perish only in the general wreck of nature.

There is no other method of fixing those thoughts which arise and disappear in the mind of man, and transmitting them to the last periods of time ; no other method of giving a permanency to our ideas, and preserving the knowledge of any particular person, when his body is mixed with the common mass of matter, and his soul retired

Books  
Legacies to  
Mankind.

---

JOSEPH  
ADDISON  
1672-1719

**Books  
Legacies  
to  
Mankind**

—  
JOSEPH  
ADDISON  
1672-1719

into the world of spirits. Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn.

All other arts of perpetuating our ideas continue but a short time



The writings of the wise are the only riches our posterity cannot squander.—*W. S. Landor.*



The Pleasures of Literature	27
<div data-bbox="331 380 387 414" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="63 531 664 1251">           THE great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time ; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive ; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the <i>best</i> knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light.         </p> <div data-bbox="335 1376 391 1411" data-label="Image"> </div>	<div data-bbox="674 282 868 369" data-label="Section-Header"> <p>The Power of Culture</p> <hr data-bbox="736 404 806 413"/> </div> <div data-bbox="697 817 857 947" data-label="Text"> <p>MATTHEW ARNOLD 1822-1889</p> </div>

Reading  
and  
Thinking

—

DR. THOMAS  
ARNOLD  
1795-1842

AN inquiring spirit is not a presumptuous one, but the very contrary. He whose whole recorded life was intended to be our perfect example is described as gaining instruction in the Temple by hearing and asking questions; the one is almost useless without the other. We should ask questions of our book and of ourselves; what is its purpose; by what means it proceeds to effect that purpose; whether we fully understand the one, and go along with the other? Do the arguments satisfy us; do the descriptions convey lively and distinct images to us; do we understand all the allusions to persons or things? In short, does our mind act over again from the writer's guidance what His acted before; do we reason as he reasoned, conceive as he conceived, think and feel as he

thought and felt ; or, if not, can we discern where and how far we do not, and can we tell why we do not ?



To divert at any time a troublesome fancy, run to thy books ; they presently fix thee to them, and drive the other out of thy thoughts. They always receive thee with the same kindness.—*Thomas Fuller.*



Reading  
and  
Thinking

—

DR. THOMAS

ARNOLD

1795-1842

30	The Pleasures of Literature
<p>Books our Instructors</p> <p>BISHOP AUNGER- VILLE 1281-1345</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>LET us consider how great a commodity of doctrine exists in books—how easily, how secretly, how safely they expose the nakedness of human ignorance, without putting it to shame. These are the masters who instruct us without rods and ferules, without hard words and anger, without clothes or money. If you approach them, they are not asleep ; if investigating, you interrogate them, they conceal nothing ; if you mistake them, they never grumble ; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p>

The Pleasures of Literature	31
<div data-bbox="334 336 389 371" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="70 453 664 1364">           READ not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. . . . Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. . . . Histories make men wise; poets, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend.         </p> <div data-bbox="342 1413 397 1447" data-label="Image"> </div>	<div data-bbox="712 274 843 361">           How to Read         </div> <hr data-bbox="743 395 812 406"/> <div data-bbox="705 736 853 961">           FRANCIS BACON, LORD VERULAM 1561-1626         </div>

The  
Pleasures  
of  
Literature  
—

Right Hon.  
A. J.  
BALFOUR  
1848

I AM deliberately of opinion that it is the pleasures and not the profits, spiritual or temporal, of literature which most require to be preached in the ear of the ordinary reader. I hold indeed the faith that all such pleasures minister to the development of much that is best in man, mental and moral; but the charm is broken and the object lost if the remote consequence is consciously pursued to the exclusion of the immediate end. It will not, I suppose, be denied that the beauties of nature are at least as well qualified to minister to our higher needs as are the beauties of literature. Yet we do not say we are going to walk to the top of such and such a hill in order to provide ourselves with "spiritual sustenance." We say we are going to

The Pleasures of Literature	33
<p>look at the view. And I am convinced that this, which is the natural and simple way of considering literature as well as nature, is also the true way. The habit of always requiring some reward for knowledge beyond the knowledge itself, be that reward some material prize, or be it what is vaguely called self-improvement, is one with which I confess I have little sympathy, fostered though it is by the whole system of our modern education. Do not suppose that I desire the impossible. I would not, if I could, destroy the examination system. But there are times, I admit, when I feel tempted somewhat to vary the prayer of the poet, and to ask whether heaven has not reserved in pity to this much educating generation some peaceful desert of literature as yet unclaimed by the crammer or the coach, where it might be possible for the student</p>	<p><b>The Pleasures of Literature</b> —</p> <p>Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR 1848</p>

34	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="153 291 332 473">The Pleasures of Literature</p> <p data-bbox="208 505 277 522">—</p> <p data-bbox="163 829 329 1012">Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR 1848</p>	<p data-bbox="358 291 959 673">to wander, even perhaps to stray, at his own pleasure, without finding every beauty labelled, every difficulty engineered, every nook surveyed, and a professional cicerone standing at every corner to guide each succeeding traveller along the same well-worn round. . . .</p> <p data-bbox="358 682 959 1498">When I compare the position of the reader of to-day with that of his predecessor of the sixteenth century, I am amazed at the ingratitude of those who are tempted even for a moment to regret the invention of printing and the multiplication of books. There is now no mood of mind to which a man may not administer the appropriate nutriment or medicine at the cost of reaching down a volume from his book-shelf. In every department of knowledge infinitely more is known, and what is known is incomparably more accessible than it was to our ances-</p>

<p><b>The Pleasures of Literature</b></p>	<p>35</p>
<p>tors. The lighter forms of literature, good, bad, and indifferent, which have added so vastly to the happiness of mankind, have increased beyond powers of computation; nor do I believe that there is any reason to think that they have elbowed out their more serious and important brethren. It is perfectly possible for a man, not a professed student, and who only gives to reading the leisure hours of a business life, to acquire such a general knowledge of the laws of nature and the facts of history, that every great advance made in either department shall be to him both intelligible and interesting; and he may besides have among his familiar friends many a departed worthy whose memory is embalmed in the pages of memoir or biography. All this is ours for the asking. All this we shall ask for, if only it be our happy fortune</p>	<p><b>The Pleasures of Literature</b></p> <hr/> <p>Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR 1848</p>

The  
Pleasures  
of  
Literature

—

Right Hon.  
A. J.  
BALFOUR  
1848

to love for its own sake the beauty and the knowledge to be gathered from books. And if this be our fortune, the world may be kind or unkind—it may seem to us to be hastening on the wings of enlightenment and progress to an imminent millennium, or it may weigh us down with the sense of insoluble difficulty and irremediable wrong; but whatever else it be, so long as we have good health and a good library, it can hardly be dull.



BUT books have the advantage in many other respects; you may read an able preacher, when you have but a mean one to hear. Every congregation cannot hear the most judicious or powerful preachers; but every single person may read the books of the most powerful and judicious. Preachers may be silenced or banished, when books may be at hand: books may be kept at a smaller charge than preachers; we may choose books which treat of that very subject which we desire to hear of; but we cannot choose what subject the preacher shall treat of. Books we may have at hand every day and hour; when we can have sermons but seldom, and at set times. If sermons be forgotten, they are gone. But a book we may read over and over, until we remember it; and, if we forget it, may again

Books  
better  
than  
Preachers

—

RICHARD  
BAXTER  
1615-1691

**Books  
better  
than  
Preachers**

---

RICHARD  
BAXTER  
1615-1691

peruse it at our pleasure, or at our leisure. So that good books are a very great mercy to the world.



BOOKS are the depository of everything that is most honourable to man. Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms. He that loves reading has everything within his reach. He has but to desire, and he may possess himself of every species of wisdom.—  
*W. Godwin.*



<p>The Pleasures of Literature</p>	<p>39</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>TO-DAY the smallest coin of the realm will suffice to procure copies of the masterpieces of thought and composition, and the humblest and the poorest individual can summon to his companionship the kings of thought, the master minds of the world. . . .</p> <p>The cold crust of class and personal selfishness is penetrated by these roots of intellectual fellowship in the commonwealth of letters, and a tide has set in which, with increasing volume, is drawing men from every class of occupation into a co-operative sympathetic understanding with each other for the advancement and diffusion of learning.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Univer= sality of Literature</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p>Hon. T. F. BAYARD 1828 —</p>

Books the  
Great  
Equalizers

—

LORD  
BEACONS-  
FIELD  
1804-1881

A MAN who knows nothing but the history of the passing hour, who knows nothing of the history of the past, but that a certain person whose brain was as vacant as his own occupied the same house as himself, who in a moment of despondency or of gloom has no hope in the morrow because he has read nothing that has taught him that the morrow has any changes—that man, compared with him who has read the most ordinary abridgment of history, or the most common philosophical speculation, is as distinct and different an animal as if he had fallen from some other planet, was influenced by a different organization, working for a different end, and hoping for a different result. It is knowledge that equalizes the social condition of man—that gives to all, however different their political position, pas-

The Pleasures of Literature	41
<p>sions which are in common, and enjoyments which are universal. Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the patriarch's dream. Its base rests on the primeval earth—its crest is lost in the shadowy splendour of the empyrean; while the great authors who for traditionary ages have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p>	<p>Books the Great Equalizers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LORD BEACONS- FIELD 1804-1881</p>

Books the  
best Com=  
panions

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F. BEAUMONT  
1586-1616  
J. FLETCHER  
1576-1625



GIVE me leave to enjoy myself ;  
that place that does contain my  
books, the best companions, is to  
me a glorious court, where hourly  
I converse with the old sages and  
philosophers ; and sometimes, for  
variety, I confer with kings and  
emperors, and weigh their counsels ;  
calling their victories, if unjustly  
got, unto a strict account, and, in  
my fancy, deface their ill-placed  
statues. Can I then part with such  
constant pleasures, to embrace un-  
certain vanities ? No ; be it your  
care to augment your heap of  
wealth ; it shall be mine to increase  
in knowledge.



WHAT is a great love of books? It is something like a personal introduction to the great and good men of all past times. Books, it is true, are silent as you see them on their shelves; but, silent as they are, when I enter a library I feel as if almost the dead were present, and I know if I put questions to these books they will answer me with all the faithfulness and fullness which has been left in them by the great men who have left the books with us. Have none of us, or may I not say, are there any of us who have not, felt some of this feeling when in a great library? When you are within its walls, and see these shelves, these thousands of volumes, and consider for a moment who they are that wrote them, who has gathered them together, for whom they are intended, how much wisdom they contain,

Books the  
Greatest  
Decoration

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JOHN BRIGHT  
1811-1889

**Books the  
Greatest  
Decoration**

—

**JOHN BRIGHT**  
1811-1889

what they tell the future ages, it is impossible not to feel something of solemnity and tranquillity when you are spending time in rooms like these; and if you come to houses of less note you find libraries that are of great estimation, and which in a less degree are able to afford mental aliment to those who are connected with them; and I am bound to say—and if any one cares very much for anything else they will not blame me—I say to them, you may have in a house costly pictures and costly ornaments, and a great variety of decoration, yet, so far as my judgment goes, I would prefer to have one comfortable room well stocked with books to all you can give me in the way of decoration which the highest art can supply. The only subject of lamentation is—one feels that always, I think, in the presence of a library—that life is too short,

and I am afraid I must say also that our industry is so far deficient, that we seem to have no hope of a full enjoyment of the ample repast that is spread before us. In the houses of the humble a little library in my opinion is a most precious possession. . . .



If the crowns of all the kingdoms of the Empire were laid down at my feet in exchange for my books and my love of reading, I would spurn them all.—*Fénélon*.



Books the  
Greatest  
Decoration



JOHN BRIGHT  
1811-1889

Reading  
and  
Thinking  
—REV. A.  
CAMERON  
1747-1828

It is good to read, mark, learn; but it is better to inwardly digest. It is good to read, better to think—better to think one hour than to read ten hours without thinking. Thinking is to reading what rain and sunshine are to the seed cast into the ground—the influence which maketh it bear and bring forth thirty, forty, or a hundred-fold. To read is to gather into the barn or storehouse of the mind; to think is to cast seed-corn into the ground to make it productive. To read is to collect information; to think is to evolve power. To read is to lay a burden in the bank; but to think is to give the feet swiftness, to the hands strength. Yet we have a thousand or ten thousand readers for one thinker, as the kind of books sought after in circulating libraries bear witness.

ON all sides, are we not driven to the conclusion that, of the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy are the things we call Books? Those poor bits of rag-paper with black ink on them—from the Daily Newspaper to the sacred Hebrew Book, what have they not done, what are they not doing? For indeed, whatever be the outward form of the thing (bits of paper as we say, and black ink), is it not verily, at bottom, the highest act of man's faculty that produces a book? It is the *Thought* of man; the true thaumaturgic virtue; by which man works all things whatsoever. All that he does, and brings to pass, is the vesture of a thought. . . . The thing we call "bits of paper with traces of black ink," is the *purest* embodiment a Thought of man can

The Purest  
Embodi-  
ment of  
Thought

THOMAS  
CARLYLE  
1795-1881

The Purest  
Embodiment of  
Thought

—  
THOMAS  
CARLYLE  
1795-1881

have. No wonder it is, in all ways, the activist and noblest.

If a book come from the heart, it will contrive to reach other hearts ; all art and author-craft are of small account to that.



Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. As by the one health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated ; by the other virtue (which is the health of the mind) is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed.—*Sir R. Steele.*



It is chiefly through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds, and these invaluable means of communication are in the reach of all. In the best books, great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours. God be thanked for books! They are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levellers. They give to all who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am; no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling; if the sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof—if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise; and Shakspeare to open to me the worlds of

**Books the  
true  
Levellers**

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DR. W. E.  
CHANNING  
1780-1842

**Books the  
true  
Levellers**

—

DR. W. E.  
CHANNING  
1780-1842

imagination and the workings of the human heart; and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom—I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live.

To make this means of culture effectual, a man must select good books, such as have been written by right-minded and strong-minded men, real thinkers; who, instead of diluting by repetition what others say, have something to say for themselves, and write to give relief to full earnest souls: and these works must not be skimmed over for amusement, but read with fixed attention, and a reverential love of truth.



The Pleasures of Literature	51
<p>Books!—the chosen depositories of the thoughts, the opinions, and the aspirations of mighty intellects;—like wondrous mirrors that have caught and fixed bright images of souls that have passed away;—like magic lyres, whose masters have bequeathed them to the world, and which yet, of themselves, ring with unforgotten music, while the hands that touched their chords have crumbled into dust. Books!—they are the embodiments and manifestations of departed minds—the living organs through which those who are dead yet speak to us. Books!—they are the garners in which are stored the wisdom bought by toil and study—the gorgeous dreams of the poet, the maxims of the philosopher, the skilful delineations of the true observer, the histories of mighty deeds, the wonders of distant lands, the rec-</p>	<p>Books the Depos- itories of Mighty Intellects —</p> <p>DR. CHAPIN 1814-1880</p>

Books the  
Depositories of  
Mighty  
Intellects

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DR. CHAPIN  
1814-1880

ords of precious facts—the messengers which the wise and the good send to us, laden with treasures for every mental want, and precepts for every duty.



Books are faithful repositories, which may be awhile neglected or forgotten; but when they are opened again, will again impart their instruction.—*Dr. S. Johnson.*





Good  
Books are  
like  
Fruit Trees



It is saying less than the truth to affirm that an excellent book (and the remark holds almost equally good of a Raphael as of a Milton) is like a well-chosen and well-tended fruit tree. Its fruits are not of one season only. With the due and natural intervals, we may recur to it year after year, and it will supply the same nourishment and the same gratification if only we ourselves return to it with the same healthful appetite.

S. T.  
COLERIDGE  
1772-1834



Books a  
Blessing in  
Youth and  
Age  
—

JEREMY  
COLLIER  
1650-1726

BOOKS are a Guide in Youth, and an Entertainment for Age. They support us under Solitude, and keep us from being a Burthen to ourselves. They help us to forget the Crossness of Men and Things; compose our Cares, and our Passions; and lay our Disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the Living, we may repair to the Dead, who have nothing of Peevishness, Pride, or Design, in their Conversation. However, to be constantly in the Wheel has neither Pleasure nor Improvement in it. A Man may as well expect to grow stronger by always Eating, as wiser by always Reading. Too much overcharges Nature, and turns more into Disease than Nourishment. 'Tis Thought and Digestion which make Books serviceable, and give Health and Vigour to the Mind. Neither ought we to be too Implicit or Resigning

to Authorities, but to examine before we Assent, and preserve our Reason in its just Liberties. To walk always upon Crutches is the way to lose the Use of our Limbs. Such an absolute Submission keeps us in a perpetual Minority, breaks the Spirits of the Understanding, and lays us open to Imposture.

But Books well managed afford Direction and Discovery.



Books are the wings to the soul ; their faithful thoughts, their high and noble aspirations, their refreshing meditations, are wings to bear us upward—onward.—*Paxton Hood.*



Books a  
Blessing in  
Youth and  
Age

—

JEREMY  
COLLIER  
1650-1726

The  
Consulting  
Room of  
the Wise

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GEORGE  
DAWSON  
1821-1876



THE great consulting-room of a wise man is a library. When I am in perplexity about life, I have but to come here, and, without fee or reward, I commune with the wisest souls that God has blest the world with. If I want a discourse on immortality Plato comes to my help. If I want to know the human heart Shakspeare opens all its chambers. What ever be my perplexity, or doubt, I know exactly the great man to call to me, and he comes in the kindest way, he listens to my doubts and tells me his convictions. So that a library may be regarded as the solemn chamber in which a man can take counsel with all that have been wise and great and good and glorious amongst the men that have gone before him.



<p><b>The Pleasures of Literature</b></p>	<p>57</p>
<p>Books delight us when prosperity smiles upon us ; they comfort us inseparably when stormy fortune frowns on us. They lend validity to human compacts, and no serious judgments are propounded without their help. Arts and sciences, all the advantages of which no mind can enumerate, consist in books. How highly must we estimate the wondrous power of books, since through them we survey the utmost bounds of the world and time, and contemplate the things that are, as well as those that are not, as it were in the mirror of eternity. In books we climb mountains and scan the deepest gulfs of the abyss ; in books we behold the finny tribes that may not exist outside their native waters, distinguish the properties of streams and springs and of various lands ; from books we dig out gems</p>	<p><b>The Delight of Books</b></p> <p>—</p> <p>RICHARD DE BURY 1287-1345</p>

**The  
Delight of  
Books**

—

RICHARD  
DE BURY  
1287-1345

and metals, and the materials of every kind of mineral, and learn the virtues of herbs and trees and plants, and survey at will the whole progeny of Neptune, Ceres, and Pluto.



When I am reading a book, whether wise or silly, it seems to me to be alive and talking to me.  
—*Dean Swift.*



<p>The Pleasures of Literature</p>	<p>59</p>
<div data-bbox="323 361 378 392" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>How I pity those who have no love of reading, of study, or of the fine arts! I have passed my youth amidst amusements and in the most brilliant society; but I can assert with perfect truth, that I have never tasted pleasures so true as those I have found in the study of books, in writing, or in music. The days that succeed brilliant entertainments are always melancholy, but those which follow days of study are delicious: we have gained something; we have acquired some new knowledge, and we recall the past days not only without disgust and without regret, but with consummate satisfaction.</p> <div data-bbox="323 1428 378 1459" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p>The Satisfaction of Literature</p> <hr data-bbox="729 482 798 496"/> <p>MADAME DE GENLIS 1746-1830</p>

The Art of  
Reading

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ISAAC  
D'ISRAELI  
1766-1848

I THINK that reading claims the same distinction. To adorn ideas with elegance is an act of the mind superior to that of receiving them ; but to receive them with a happy discrimination, is the effect of a practised taste.

Yet it will be found that taste alone is not sufficient to obtain the proper end of reading. Two persons of equal taste rise from the perusal of the same book with very different notions : the one will have the ideas of the author at command, and find a new train of sentiment awakened ; while the other quits his author in a pleasing distraction, but of the pleasures of reading nothing remains but tumultuous sensations.

. . . . .

Many ingenious readers complain that their memory is defective, and their studies unfruitful. This defect

## The Pleasures of Literature

61

arises from their indulging the facile pleasures of perceptions, in preference to the laborious habit of forming them into ideas. Perceptions require only the sensibility of taste, and their pleasures are continuous, easy, and exquisite. Ideas are an art of combination, and an exertion of the reasoning powers. Ideas are therefore labours; and for those who will not labour, it is unjust to complain, if they come from the harvest with scarcely a sheaf in their hands.

There are secrets in the art of reading, which tend to facilitate its purposes, by assisting the memory, and augmenting intellectual opulence. Some, our own ingenuity must form, and perhaps every student has peculiar habits of study, as, in shorthand, almost every writer has a system of his own.

A frequent impediment in reading is a disinclination in the mind

## The Art of Reading

—

ISAAC  
D'ISRAELI  
1766-1848

**The Art of  
Reading**

—

ISAAC  
D'ISRAELI  
1766-1848

to settle on the subject ; agitated by incongruous and dissimilar ideas, it is with pain that we admit those of the author. But on applying ourselves with a gentle violence to the perusal of an interesting work, the mind soon assimilates to the subject ; the ancient Rabbins advised their young students to apply themselves to their readings, whether they felt an inclination or not, because, as they proceeded, they would find their disposition restored and their curiosity awakened.

Readers may be classed into an infinite number of divisions ; but an author is a solitary being, who, for the same reason he pleases one, must consequently displease another. To have too exalted a genius is more prejudicial to his celebrity than to have a moderate one ; for we shall find that the most popular works are not the most profound, but such as instruct those

The Pleasures of Literature	63
<p>who require instruction, and charm those who are not learned to taste their novelty.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">. . . . .</p> <p>Authors are vain, but readers are capricious. Some will only read old books, as if there were no valuable truths to be discovered in modern publications ; while others will only read new books, as if some valuable truths are not among the old. Some will not read a book, because they are acquainted with the author ; by which the reader may be more injured than the author ; others not only read the book, but would also read the man ; by which the most ingenious author may be injured by the most impertinent reader.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">❁</p>	<p>The Art of Reading</p> <hr style="width: 10%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p style="text-align: right;">ISAAC D'ISRAELI 1766-1848</p>

The  
Benefits of  
Books—  
  
R. W.  
EMERSON  
1803-1882

CONSIDER what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written out in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age. We owe to books those general benefits which come from high intellectual action. Thus, I think, we often owe to them the perception of immortality.



The Pleasures of Literature	65
<p>THANKS to the printed page, it is not the blood-stained conquerors, not the despotic kings, not the ignorant shouters of anarchy, who rule the world: it is the knowledge of the wise.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">. . . . .</p> <p>More eternal than the Pyramids, they are the imperishable shrines, not of dead ashes, but of living souls. It is by their means that truths become irresistible. A monk at Erfurt sits poring over the Epistle to the Galatians in his lonely cell. While he is musing, the fire burns. At last he speaks with his tongue, and, lo! the nations, laughing to scorn the impotence of popes and emperors, shake a thousand of years of cruel tyranny and superstitious priestcraft to the dust. An astronomer observes through his rude telescope the planet Venus in cres-</p>	<p>Books the Knowledge of the Wise —</p> <p>DEAN FARRAR 1831</p>

66	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="149 267 338 458">Books the Knowledge of the Wise —</p> <p data-bbox="187 840 304 961">DEAN FARRAR 1831</p>	<p data-bbox="358 267 961 840">cent, divines the facts of the planetary system, is denounced as a heretic, thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition, and forced to recant upon his knees. A few years pass, and by the help of the printed page men see that this heresy was an eternal truth, and that this discoverer whom priests treated as a criminal had done more than any who yet had lived to reveal to man's mind the plan of God.</p> <p data-bbox="425 887 881 909">. . . . .</p> <p data-bbox="358 956 961 1482">Then think what books have done for liberty! In old days of the struggle for freedom many a grand speech might die away within the walls where it was uttered : now by the aid of the printing-press, reverberated through all the nations, it may go thrilling and thrilling through the world, and come rolling back to the speaker in millions of echoes. The spoken word may</p>

The Pleasures of Literature	67
<p>reach two or three thousand: the printed page may be read by three hundred millions of men and women.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">. . . . .</p> <p>“Give them,” said Sheridan, “a corrupt House of Lords, give them a venal House of Commons, give them a tyrannical prince, give them a truckling court, and let me but have an unfettered press, and I will defy them to encroach but a hair’s breadth on the liberty of England.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>All the known world, excepting only savage nations, is governed by books.—<i>Voltaire.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p>	<p>Books the Knowledge of the Wise</p> <hr style="width: 10%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p style="text-align: right;">DEAN FARRAR 1831</p>

68	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="137 288 308 371">The Love of Books</p> <hr data-bbox="187 413 259 420"/> <p data-bbox="153 829 301 951">J. H. FRISWELL 1827-1878</p>	<p data-bbox="337 361 948 1425">           WHEN a man loves books he has in him that which will console him under many sorrows and strengthen him in various trials. Such a love will keep him at home, and make his time pass pleasantly. Even when visited by bodily or mental affliction he can resort to this book-love and be cured. . . . And when a man is at home and happy with a book, sitting by his fireside, he must be a churl if he does not communicate that happiness. Let him read now and then to his wife and children. Those thoughts will grow and take root in the hearts of the listeners. Good scattered about is indeed the seed of the sower. A man who feels sympathy with what is good and noble, is at the time he feels that sympathy good and noble himself.         </p>

## The Pleasures of Literature

69

Books are delightful society. If you go into a room and find it full of books—even without taking them from their shelves they seem to speak to you, to bid you welcome. They seem to tell you that they have got something inside their covers that will be good for you, and that they are willing and desirous to impart to you. Value them much. Endeavour to turn them to good account, and pray recollect this, that the education of the mind is not merely a storage of goods in the mind. The mind of man, some people seem to think, is a storehouse which should be filled with a quantity of useful commodities which may be taken out like packets from a shop, and delivered and distributed according to the occasions of life. I will not say that this is not true as far as it goes, but it goes a very little

The  
Society of  
Books  
—

Right Hon.  
W. E.  
GLADSTONE  
1809-1898

**The  
Society of  
Books**

—

Right. Hon.  
W. E.  
GLADSTONE  
1809-1898

way ; for commodities may be taken in, and commodities may be taken out, but the warehouse remains just the same as it was before, or probably a little worse. That ought not to be the case with a man's mind.



The knowledge of books, like the wealth of another, is not thine until thou hast made it so ; but he who hath not knowledge serveth him who hath, to whom alone is homage paid or due.—*Burmese Proverb.*



## The Pleasures of Literature

71

Books are the depository of everything that is most honourable to man. Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms. He that loves reading, has everything within his reach. He has but to desire ; and he may possess himself of every species of wisdom to judge, and power to perform. . . . Books gratify and excite our curiosity in innumerable ways. They force us to reflect. They hurry us from point to point. They present direct ideas of various kinds, and they suggest indirect ones. In a well-written book we are presented with the maturest reflections, or the happiest flights, of a mind of uncommon excellence. It is impossible that we can be much accustomed to such companions, without attaining some resemblance of them.

The  
Gratification  
of Books

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WILLIAM  
GODWIN  
1756-1836

The  
Gratifica-  
tion  
of Books  
—

WILLIAM  
GODWIN  
1756-1836

When I read Thomson, I become Thomson; when I read Milton, I become Milton. I find myself a sort of intellectual chameleon, assuming the colour of the substances on which I rest. He that revels in a well-chosen library has innumerable dishes, and all of admirable flavour. His taste is rendered so acute as easily to distinguish the nicest shades of difference. His mind becomes ductile, susceptible to every impression, and gaining new refinement from them all. His varieties of thinking baffle calculation, and his powers, whether of reason or fancy, become eminently vigorous.



The Pleasures of Literature	73
<p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>T<small>HERE</small> is unspeakable pleasure attending the life of a voluntary student. The first time I read an excellent book, it is to me just as if I had gained a new friend : when I read over a book I have perused before, it resembles the meeting with an old one.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>Learn nothing imperfectly, and let your conduct be worthy of your knowledge.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p>	<p><b>New Books are New Friends</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">— —</p> <p>OLIVER GOLDSMITH 1728-1774</p>

74	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="146 274 329 458">The Advantages of Literature</p> <p data-bbox="200 482 270 510">—</p> <p data-bbox="153 812 319 986">Right Hon. G. J. GOSCHEN 1831</p>	<p data-bbox="350 326 959 1489">HISTORY deals with the things of the past. They are <i>absent</i>, in a sense, from your minds—that is to say, you cannot see them; but the study of history qualifies you and strengthens your capacity for understanding things that are not present to you, and thus I wish to recommend history to you as a most desirable course of study. Then, again, take geography, travels in foreign countries. Here, again, you have matters which are absent, in the physical sense, from you; but the study of travels will enable you to realize things that are absent to your own minds. And as for the power of forming ideal pictures, there I refer you to poets, dramatists, and imaginative writers, to the great literature of all times and of all countries. Such studies as these will enable you to live, and to move, and to think, in a world different</p>

## The Pleasures of Literature

75

from the narrow world by which you are surrounded. These studies will open up to you sources of amusement which, I think I may say, will often rise into happiness. I wish you, by the aid of the training which I recommend, to be able to look beyond your own lives, and have pleasure in surroundings different from those in which you move. I want you to be able—mark this point—to sympathize with other times, to be able to understand the men and women of other countries, and to have the intense enjoyment—an enjoyment which, I am sure, you would all appreciate—of mental change of scene. I do not only want you to know dry facts; I am not only looking to a knowledge of facts, nor chiefly to that knowledge. I want the heart to be stirred as well as the intellect. I want you to feel more and live more than you can do if you only know what

## The Advantages of Literature

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Right Hon.  
G. J.  
GOSCHEN  
1831

**The  
Advan=  
tages of  
Literature**

—

Right. Hon.

G. J.

GOSCHEN

1831

surrounds yourselves. I want the action of the imagination, the sympathetic study of history and travels, the broad teaching of the poets, and, indeed, of the best writers of other times and other countries, to neutralize and check the dwarfing influences of necessarily narrow careers and necessarily stunted lives.



No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting.  
—*Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.*



WHAT are the subjects, what are the class of books we are to read, in what order, with what connection, to what ultimate use or object? Even those who are resolved to read better books are embarrassed by a field of choice practically boundless. The longest life, the greatest industry, joined to the most powerful memory, would not suffice to make us profit from a hundredth part of the world of books before us. If the great Newton said that he seemed to have been all his life gathering a few shells on the shore, whilst a boundless ocean of truth still lay beyond and unknown to him, how much more to each of us must the sea of literature be a pathless immensity beyond our powers of vision or of reach—an immensity in which industry itself is useless without judgment, method, discipline; where it is of infinite im-

What  
Class of  
Book  
to Read

—

FREDERIC  
HARRISON  
1831

**What  
Class of  
Book  
to Read**

—

FREDERIC  
HARRISON  
1831

portance what we can learn and remember, and of utterly no importance what we may have once looked at or heard of. Alas! the most of our reading leaves as little mark even in our own education as the foam that gathers round the keel of a passing boat! For myself, I am inclined to think the most useful help to reading is to know what we should not read, what we can keep out from that small cleared spot in the overgrown jungle of "information," the corner which we can call our ordered patch of fruit-bearing knowledge. The incessant accumulation of fresh books must hinder any real knowledge of the old; for the multiplicity of volumes becomes a bar upon our use of any. In literature especially does it hold—that we cannot see the wood for the trees.

Books are no more education than laws are virtue. Of all men,

perhaps, the Book-lover needs most to be reminded that man's business here is to *know* for the sake of living, *not* to live for the sake of knowing.

What  
Class of  
Book  
to Read

—

FREDERIC  
HARRISON  
1831



Books never annoy; they cost little, and they are always at hand, and ready at your call.—*W. Corbett.*



Fashion in  
ReadingWILLIAM  
HAZLITT  
1778-1830

THERE is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old; that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another—that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge?

## The Pleasures of Literature

81

Yet this might appear to be the inference.

. . . . .

Oh, delightful! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to. Who, indeed, when the work is critical and full of expectation, would venture to dine out, or to face a coterie of blue-stockings in the evening, without having gone through this ordeal, or at least without hastily turning over a few of the first pages, while dressing, to be able to

Fashion in  
Reading

---

WILLIAM  
HAZLITT  
1778-1830

Fashion in  
Reading

—

WILLIAM  
HAZLITT  
1778-1830

say that the beginning does not promise much, or to tell the name of the heroine?

A new work is something in our power; we mount the bench, and sit in judgment on it.



I have somewhere seen it observed, that we should make the same use of a book that the bee does of a flower; she steals sweets from it but does not injure it.—  
*Colton.*



WHAT are the objects men pursue in reading? They are these—amusement, instruction, a wish to appear well in society, and a desire to pass away time. Now even the lowest of these is facilitated by reading with method. The keenness of pursuit thus engendered enriches the most trifling gain, takes away the sense of dulness in details, and gives an interest to what would otherwise be most repugnant. No one who has never known the eager joy of some intellectual pursuit can understand the full pleasure of reading.


There is another view of reading which, though it is obvious enough, is seldom taken, I imagine, or at least acted upon; and that is, that in the course of our reading we should lay up in our minds a store of goodly thoughts in well-wrought words, which should be a living

The  
Objects  
of Reading

SIR ARTHUR  
HELPS  
1817-1875

84	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="148 274 332 465">The Objects of Reading —</p> <p data-bbox="148 795 332 921">SIR ARTHUR HELPS 1817-1875</p>	<p data-bbox="353 274 954 1489">treasure of knowledge always with us, and from which, at various times and amidst all the shifting of circumstances, we might be sure of drawing some comfort, guidance, and sympathy. We see this with regard to the sacred writings. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" But there is a similar comfort on a lower level, to be obtained from other sources than sacred ones. In any work that is worth carefully reading, there is generally something that is worth remembering accurately. A man whose mind is enriched with the best sayings of his own country, is a more independent man, walks the streets in a town, or the lanes in the country, with far more delight than he otherwise would have; and is taught by wise observers of man and nature, to examine for himself. Sancho Panza with his proverbs is a great deal better than he would have</p>

<p><b>The Pleasures of Literature</b></p>	<p>85</p>
<p>been without them ; and I contend that a man has something in himself to meet troubles and difficulties, small or great, who has stored in his mind some of the best things which have been said about troubles and difficulties. Moreover, the loneliness of sorrow is thereby diminished.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">. . . . .</p> <p>There is a very refined use which reading is put to ; namely, to counteract the particular evils and temptations of our callings, the original imperfections of our characters, the tendencies of our age, or of our own time of life. Those, for instance, who are versed in dull, crabbed work all day, of a kind which is always exercising the logical faculty and demanding minute, not to say, vexatious criticism, would, during their leisure, do wisely to expatiate in writings of a large and imaginative nature.</p>	<p><b>The Objects of Reading</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p><b>SIR ARTHUR HELPS 1817-1875</b></p>

86	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="142 291 322 430">The Objects of Reading —</p> <p data-bbox="142 591 322 722">SIR ARTHUR HELPS 1817-1875</p>	<p data-bbox="348 296 948 829">These, however, are often the persons who particularly avoid poetry and works of imagination, whereas they ought to cultivate them most. For it should be one of the frequent objects of every man who cares for the culture of his whole being, to give some exercise to those faculties which are not demanded by his daily occupation and not encouraged by his disposition.</p> <div data-bbox="619 1117 671 1152" style="text-align: center;">  </div>

## The Pleasures of Literature

87

WERE I to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me during life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss, and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. Give a man this taste and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making him a happy man; unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history, with the wisest, the wittiest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters, who have adorned humanity, You make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages.



A Taste for  
Books and  
Reading.

—

SIR J.  
HERSCHEL  
1792-1871

The  
Leisure  
and  
Pleasure  
of Books  
—

DR. O. W.  
HOLMES  
1809-1894

BOOKS are the *negative* pictures of thought, and the more sensitive the mind that receives their images, the more nicely the finest lines are reproduced. . . . A scholar must shape his own shell, *secrete* it, for secretion is only separation, you know, of certain elements derived from the materials of the world about us. And a scholar's study is his shell. . . . Of course I must have my literary *harem*, my *parc aux cerfs*, where my favourites await my moments of leisure and pleasure,—my scarce and precious editions, my luxurious typographical masterpieces ; my Delilahs, that take my head in their lap ; secret treasures that nobody else knows anything about ; books, in short, that I like for insufficient reasons it may be, but peremptorily, and mean to like and to love and to cherish till death us do part.

The Pleasures of Literature	89
<div data-bbox="348 371 401 406" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="73 517 674 1234"> MANY, many a dreary, weary hour  have I got over—many a gloomy  misgiving postponed—many a men-  tal or bodily annoyance forgotten,  by help of the tragedies and come-  dies of our dramatists and novelists !  Many a trouble has been soothed  by the still small voice of the moral  philosopher — many a dragon-like  care charmed to sleep by the sweet  song of the poet ; for all which I  cry incessantly, not aloud, but in  my heart, thanks and honour to the  glorious masters of the pen, and the  great inventors of the press ! </p> <div data-bbox="344 1361 398 1395" data-label="Image"> </div>	<div data-bbox="693 291 884 378" data-label="Section-Header"> The Charm  of Books </div> <div data-bbox="750 430 822 440" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="718 805 853 933" data-label="Text"> THOMAS  HOOD  1798-1845 </div>

90	The Measures of Literature
<p>Books a Portion of the Eternal Mind —</p> <p>LORD HOUGHTON 1809-1885</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>THINK what a book is. It is a portion of the eternal mind caught in its process through the world, stamped in an instant, and preserved for eternity. Think what it is; that enormous amount of human sympathy and intelligence that is contained in these volumes; and think what it is that this sympathy should be communicated to the masses of the people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>The reading which has pleased, will please when repeated ten times. —<i>Horace.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p>



LEARNING is not to be won by short cuts or royal roads, yet, as the philosopher's stone could turn whatever it touched into gold, so the true lover of literature can, by the alchemy of a sympathetic mind, find the true gold of the intellect in the works to which he applies himself.



Have you knowledge?—Apply it. Have you not?—Confess your ignorance. This is true wisdom.—*Pagan Philosophy.*



The True  
Lover of  
Literature

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EARL OF  
IDDESLEIGH  
1818-1887

Poetry in  
Literature

—

WASHINGTON  
IRVING.  
1783-1859

WITH the true poet everything is terse, touching, or brilliant. He gives the choicest thoughts in the choicest language. He illustrates them by everything that he sees most striking in nature and art. He enriches them by pictures of human life, such as it is passing before him. His writings, therefore, contain the spirit, the aroma, if I may use the phrase, of the age in which he lives. They are caskets which enclose within a small compass the wealth of the language,—its family jewels, which are thus transmitted in a portable form to posterity. The setting may occasionally be antiquated, and require now and then to be renewed, as in the case of Chaucer ; but the brilliancy and intrinsic value of the gems continue unaltered. Cast a look back over the long reach of literary history. What vast valleys of dulness, filled

with monkish legends and academical controversies! what bogs of theological speculations! what dreary wastes of metaphysics! Here and there only do we behold the heaven-illuminated bards, elevated like beacons on their widely separate heights, to transmit the pure light of poetical intelligence from age to age.



The learned man's country is every country, and each town his town. Why, then, do men remain ignorant?—*Pagan Wisdom.*



Poetry in Literature



WASHINGTON

IRVING

1783-1859

Books good  
Counsel=  
lors

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BEN JONSON  
1573-1637



A PRINCE without letters is a pilot without eyes. All his government is groping. In sovereignty it is a most happy thing not to be compelled; but so it is the most miserable not to be counselled. And how can he be counselled that cannot see to read the best counsellors (which are books); for they neither flatter us nor hide from us? He may hear, you will say; but how shall he always be sure to hear truth? or be counselled the best things, not the sweetest?



EXCEPT a living man, there is nothing more wonderful than a book!—a message to us from the dead—from human souls whom we never saw, who lived, perhaps, thousands of miles away; and yet these, on those little sheets of paper, speak to us, amuse us, vivify us, teach us, comfort us, open their hearts to us as brothers. . . . I say we ought to reverence books, to look at them as useful and mighty things. If they are good and true, whether they are about religion or politics, farming, trade, or medicine, they are the message of Christ, the maker of all things, the teacher of all truth, which He has put into the heart of some man to speak, that he may tell us what is good for our spirits, for our bodies, and for our country. Would to God that all here would make the rule never to look into an evil book!

The  
Wonderful  
Character  
of Books

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CHARLES  
KINGSLEY  
1819-1875

Thoughts  
in an Old  
Library

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CHARLES  
LAMB  
1775-1834



WHAT a place to be in is an old library ! It seems as though all the souls of all the writers, that have bequeathed their labours to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding-sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage ; and the odour of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those scintial apples which grew amid the happy orchard.



## The Pleasures of Literature

97

THE only true equalizers in the world are books ; the only treasure-house open to all comers is a library ; the only wealth which will not decay is knowledge ; the only jewel which you can carry beyond the grave is wisdom. To live in this equality, to share in these treasures, to possess this wealth, and to secure this jewel may be the happy lot of every one. All that is needed for the acquisition of these inestimable treasures, is the love of books. . . .

As friends and companions, as teachers and consolers, as recreators and amusers, books are always with us, and always ready to respond to our wants. We can take them with us in our wanderings, or gather them around us at our firesides. In the lonely wilderness, and the crowded city, their spirit will be with us, giving a meaning to the seemingly confused movements of humanity,

Books are  
always  
with us

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J. A.  
LANGFORD  
1823

Books are  
always  
with us

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J. A.  
LANGFORD  
1823

and peopling the desert with their own bright creations. Without the love of books the richest man is poor; but endowed with this treasure of treasures, the poorest man is rich. He has wealth which no power can diminish; riches which are always increasing; possessions which the more he scatters the more they accumulate; friends who never desert him, and pleasures which never cloy.



Books are the immortal sons  
deifying their sires.—*Plato.*



The Pleasures of Literature	99
<p>THE study of literature as literature—as an embodiment of the best thought and emotion set forth in the best forms of which words are capable—the study of literature in this sense is, I believe, the best instrument in liberalizing education, and for us English people I think that our own literature might not prove the worst instrument wherewith to gain this end.</p> <p>The Greeks, who fully recognized the place that literature should occupy in a liberal education, found in their own literature the means of supplying their youth with liberal culture. And their education was not the less efficient in consequence. The Romans undoubtedly drew most of their liberal culture from Greek literature, but the inferiority of all but a small fraction of their own literary effort does not make their experience altogether parallel</p>	<p>The Greatness of English Literature</p> <p>—</p> <p>SIDNEY LEE</p> <p>1859</p>

100	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="161 296 339 479">The Greatness of English Literature</p> <p data-bbox="215 505 285 531">—</p> <p data-bbox="161 557 339 635">SIDNEY LEE 1859</p>	<p data-bbox="365 296 965 722">to our own. A Frenchman a hundred years ago asserted that English literature was the most varied in the world. It has grown since then, and the greatness of the inheritance in quality and in quantity is indisputable. It kindles enthusiasm in all who are competent to study it at home or abroad.</p> <div data-bbox="640 869 692 899" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2">✱</div> <p data-bbox="365 1043 965 1225">Love of reading enables a man to exchange the weary hours which come to every one, for hours of delight.—<i>Montesquieu.</i></p> <div data-bbox="640 1373 692 1402" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2">✱</div>



EDUCATION begins the gentleman, but reading, good company, and reflection must finish him.

Those who have read of everything are thought to understand everything too ; but it is not always so. Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge ; it is thinking that makes what is read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections ; unless we chew them over again they will not give us strength and nourishment.



The Mind  
Furnished  
by  
Reading

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JOHN LOCKE  
1632-1704

**The Uni=  
versality  
of Books**  
—

SIR JOHN  
LUBBOCK  
1834

WE may sit in our library and yet be in all quarters of the earth. We may travel round the world with Captain Cook or Darwin, with Kingsley or Ruskin, who will show us much more perhaps than ever we should see for ourselves. The world itself has no limits for us ; Humboldt and Herschel will carry us far away to the mysterious nebulæ, far beyond the sun and even the stars ; time has no more bounds than space ; history stretches out behind us, and geology will carry us back for millions of years before the creation of man, even to the origin of the material Universe itself. We are not limited even to one plane of thought. Aristotle and Plato will transport us into a sphere none the less delightful because it requires some training to appreciate it. We may make a library, if we do but rightly use it,

## The Pleasures of Literature

103

a true paradise on earth, a garden of Eden without its one drawback, for all is open to us, including and especially the fruit of the tree of knowledge for which we are told that our first mother sacrificed all the rest. Here we may read the most important histories, the most exciting volumes of travels and adventures, the most interesting stories, the most beautiful poems, we may meet the most eminent statesmen and poets and philosophers, benefit by the ideas of the greatest thinkers, and enjoy all the greatest creations of human genius.

The Uni=  
versality  
of Books

—

SIR JOHN  
LUBBOCK  
1834



Purpose=  
less  
Reading.  
—

LORD  
LYTTON  
1803-1873

READING without purpose is sauntering, not exercise. More is got from one book on which the thought settles for a definite end in knowledge, than from libraries skimmed over by a wandering eye. A cottage flower gives honey to the bee, a king's garden none to the butterfly.

I say that books, taken indiscriminately, are no cure to the diseases and afflictions of the mind. There is a world of science necessary in the taking them. I have known some people in great sorrow fly to a novel, or the last light book in fashion. One might as well take a rose-draught for the plague! Light reading does not do when the heart is really heavy.



The Pleasures of Literature	105
<p style="text-align: center;">✱</p> <p>THE best education in the world is that which we insensibly acquire from conversation with our intellectual superiors. . . . In learning to know other things and other minds, we become more intimately acquainted with ourselves, and are to ourselves better worth knowing. In our own nature as it expands we find a sweeter yet less selfish companionship. All that we have read and learned, all that has occupied and interested us in the thoughts and deeds of men, abler or wiser than ourselves, constitutes at last a spiritual society, of which we can never be deprived, for it rests in the heart and soul of the man who has acquired it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✱</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Cultivation of the Intellect —</p> <p style="text-align: right;">LORD LYTTON (OWEN MEREDITH) 1831-1891</p>

106	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="139 291 319 425"><b>The Power of Literature</b></p> <p data-bbox="194 451 264 477">—</p> <p data-bbox="153 812 312 937">LORD MACAULAY 1800-1859</p>	<p data-bbox="347 338 947 1501">FILL your glasses to the Literature of Britain ; to that literature the brightest, the purest, the most durable of all the glories of our country ; to that literature, so rich in precious truth and precious fiction ; to that literature which boasts of the prince of all poets and of the prince of all philosophers ; to that literature which has exercised an influence wider than that of our commerce, and mightier than that of our arms ; to that literature which has taught France the principles of liberty, and has furnished Germany with models of art ; to that literature which forms a tie closer than the tie of consanguinity between us and the commonwealths of the valley of the Mississippi ; to that literature before the light of which impious and cruel superstitions are fast taking flight on the banks of the Ganges ; to that literature which</p>

## The Pleasures of Literature

107

will, in future ages, instruct and delight the unborn millions who will have turned the Australasian and Caffrarian deserts into cities and gardens. To the Literature of Britain, then! And, wherever British literature spreads, may it be attended by British virtue and by British freedom.



## The Power of Literature

—

LORD  
MACAULAY.  
1800-1859

**The Thirst  
for Books**  
—

LORD  
MACAULAY  
1800-1859



I STILL retain my thirst for knowledge ; my passion for holding converse with the greatest minds of all ages and nations ; my power of forgetting what surrounds me, of living with the past, the future, and the unreal. Books are becoming everything to me. If I had at this moment my choice of life, I would bury myself in one of those immense libraries that we saw together at the universities, and would never pass a waking hour without a book before me.



THE pleasures of reading deserve most careful cultivation. Other objects which we have in this world, other pleasures which we seek to pursue, depend materially on other circumstances, on the opinion or caprice of others, on the flourishing or depressed state of an interest or a profession, on connections, on friends, on opportunities, on the prevalence of one party or the other in the State. Thus, then, it happens, that without any fault of ours, with regard to objects dear to us, we may be constantly doomed to disappointment. In the pleasure of reading, on the other hand, see how much is at all times within your own power ; how little you depend upon any one but yourself. . . . See how little the man who can rely on the pleasures of reading is dependent on the caprice or the will of his fellow-men. See how

The  
Cultivation  
of Reading

—

LORD  
MAHON  
1791-1875

**The  
Cultivation  
of Reading**

—

LORD  
MAHON  
1791-1875

much there is within his own power and control ;—how by reading, if his circumstances have been thwarted by any of the fortuitous events to which I have just referred, how often it is in his power by these very studies, to better his condition ; or, failing in that, how many hours he has in which to obtain oblivion from it, when communing with the great and good of other days. Surely, then, all those who feel — and who does not ? — the variety and the vicissitudes of human life, ought, on that very account, if they be wise, to cultivate in themselves, and also to promote in others, an enlightened taste for reading. Of the pleasures of reading I will say, that there is no man so high as to be enabled to dispense with them ; and no man so humble who should be compelled to forego them. Rely upon it, that in the highest fortune and the high-

## The Pleasures of Literature

III

est station, hours of lassitude and weariness will intrude, unless they be cheered by intellectual occupation. Rely on it, also, that there is no life so toilsome, so devoted to the cares of this world, and to the necessity of providing the daily bread, but what it will afford intervals (if they be only sought out) in which intellectual pleasures may be cultivated and oblivion of other cares enjoyed. Depend upon it that these are pleasures, which he who condemns will find himself a miserable loser in the end.

### The Cultivation of Reading

—

LORD  
MAHON  
1791-1875



On the  
Choice of  
Books

—

REV. J. R.  
MILLER.

ON what principle do most persons choose the books they read? Is there one in a hundred who ever gives a serious thought to the question, or makes any intelligent choice whatever? With many it is "the latest novel," utterly regardless of what it is. With others it is any book that is talked about or extensively advertised. We live in a time when the trivial is glorified and held up in the blaze of sensation so as to attract the multitude, and sell. That is all many books are made for—to sell. They are written for money. There is no soul in them. There was no high motive, no thought of doing good to any one, of inspiring higher impulses, of adding to the world's joy, comfort, or knowledge. They were made to sell, and to sell they must appeal to the taste of the day, or, in other words, to the desire for sensation,

## The Pleasures of Literature

113

excitement, and diversion. So the country is flooded with worthless literature, whilst really good and valuable books are unsold and unread. The multitude devour ephemeral tales, weekly literary papers, society gossip, magazines, and the many new and trivial works that please or excite for a day, and are then forgotten. There are great books enough to occupy us during all our short and busy years; and if we are wise, we shall resolutely avoid all but the richest and the best.

On the  
Choice of  
Books

—

REV. J. R.  
MILLER



**Books  
not Dead  
Things**  
—

JOHN  
MILTON  
1608-1674

BOOKS are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth: and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is

## The Pleasures of Literature

115

true, no age can restore a life, whereof, perhaps, there is no great loss ; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books.

**Books  
not Dead  
Things**

—

JOHN  
MILTON  
1608-1674



How  
to Read a  
Good Book

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Right Hon.  
JOHN  
MORLEY  
1838

KNOWLEDGE is worth little until you have made it so perfectly your own, as to be capable of reproducing it in precise and definite form. Goethe said that in the end we only retain of our studies, after all, what we practically employ of them. And it is at least well that in our serious studies we should have the possibility of practically turning them to a definite destination, clearly before our eyes. Nobody can be sure that he has got clear ideas on a subject, unless he has tried to put them down on a piece of paper in independent words of his own. It is an excellent plan, too, when you have read a good book, to sit down and write a short abstract of what you can remember of it. It is a still better plan, if you can make up your mind to a slight extra labour, to do what Lord Strafford, and Gibbon, and Daniel

The Pleasures of Literature	117
<p>Webster did. After glancing over the title, subject, or design of a book, these eminent men would take a pen and write roughly what questions they expected to find answered in it, what difficulties solved, what kind of information imparted. Such practices keep us from reading with the eye only, gliding vaguely over the page: and they help us to <i>place</i> our new acquisitions in relation with what we knew before. It is almost always worth while to read a thing twice over, to make sure that nothing has been missed or dropped on the way, or wrongly conceived or interpreted. And if the subject be serious, it is often well to let an interval elapse. Ideas, relations, statements of fact, are not to be taken by storm. We have to steep them in the mind, in the hope of thus extracting their inmost essence and significance. If one lets an interval pass, and then returns, it is</p>	<p>How to Read a Good Book —</p> <p>Right Hon. JOHN MORLEY 1838</p>

How  
to Read a  
Good Book

—

Right Hon.  
JOHN  
MORLEY  
1838

surprising how clear and ripe that has become, which, when we left it, seemed crude, obscure, full of perplexity.

All this takes trouble, no doubt, but then it will not do to deal with ideas that we find in books or elsewhere as a certain bird does with its eggs—leave them in the sand for the sun to hatch and chance to rear. People who follow this plan possess nothing better than ideas half-hatched, and convictions reared by accident. They are like a man who should pace up and down the world in the delusion that he is clad in sumptuous robes of purple and velvet, when in truth he is only half-covered by the rags and tatters of other people's cast-off clothes.

Apart from such mechanical devices as these I have mentioned, there are habits and customary attitudes of mind which a conscientious reader will practice, if he desires to

get out of a book still greater benefits than the writer of it may have designed or thought of. For example, he should never be content with mere aggressive and negatory criticism of the page before him. The page may be open to such criticism, and in that case it is natural to indulge in it; but the reader will often find an unexpected profit by asking himself—what does this error teach me? How comes that fallacy to be here? How came the writer to fall into this defect of taste? To ask such questions gives a reader a far healthier tone of mind in the long run, more seriousness, more depth, more moderation of judgment, more insight into other men's ways of thinking as well as into his own, than any amount of impatient condemnation and hasty denial, even when both condemnation and denial may be in their place.

How  
to Read a  
Good Book

—

Right Hon.  
JOHN  
MORLEY  
1838

Books as  
Ships of  
Thought  
—THEODORE  
PARKER  
1810-1860

I FEAR we do not know what a power of immediate pleasure and permanent profit is to be had in a good book. The books which help you most are those which make you think the most. The hardest way of learning is by easy reading; every man that tries it finds it so. But a great book that comes from a great thinker,—it is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth, with beauty too. It sails the ocean, driven by the winds of heaven, breaking the level sea of life into beauty where it goes, leaving behind it a train of sparkling loveliness, widening as the ship goes on. And what treasures it brings to every land, scattering the seeds of truth, justice, love, and piety, to bless the world in ages yet to come.



## The Pleasures of Literature

121

Old Books  
should be  
Re-read  
—

MARK  
PATTISON  
1813-1884

THOSE who most read books don't want to talk about them. The conversation of the man who reads to any purpose will be flavoured by his reading ; but it will not be about his reading. The people who read in order to talk about it, are people who read the books of the season because they are the fashion—books which come in with the season and go out with it. “ In literature, I am fond of confining myself to the best company, which consists chiefly of my old acquaintance with whom I am desirous of becoming more intimate. I suspect that nine times out of ten it is more profitable, if not more agreeable, to read an old book over again than to read a new one for the first time. . . . Is it not better to try to elevate and endow one's mind by the constant study and contemplation of the great models, than

Old Books  
should be  
Re-read

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MARK  
PATTISON  
1813-1884

merely to know of one's own knowledge that such a book is not worth reading? "



## The Pleasures of Literature

123

I HAVE friends (my books), whose society is extremely agreeable to me: they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honours for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them; for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits, while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend

### The Friendship of Books

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FRANCESCO  
PETRARCH  
1304-1374

**The  
Friendship  
of Books**

—

FRANCESCO  
PETRARCH  
1304-1374

wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I safely rely, in all emergencies. In return for all these services, they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation, where they may repose in peace: for these friends are more delighted by the tranquillity of retirement, than with the tumults of society.



The Pleasures of Literature	125
<p>THE very first thing to be remembered by him who would study the art of reading is that nothing can take the place of personal enthusiasm and personal work. However wise may be the friendly adviser, and however full and perfect the chosen hand-book of reading, neither can do more than to stimulate and suggest. Nothing can take the place of a direct familiarity with books themselves. To <i>know</i> one good book well, is better than to know something <i>about</i> a hundred good books, at second-hand. The taste for reading and the habit of reading must always be developed from within; they can never be added from without. . . .</p> <p>The general agreement of intelligent people as to the merit of an author or the worth of a book, is, of course, to be accepted until one finds some valid reason for reversing</p>	<p>The Taste for Reading —</p> <p>C. F. RICHARDSON 1841</p>

The Taste  
for  
Reading  
—

C. F.  
RICHARDSON  
1841

it. But nothing is to be gained by pretending to like what one really dislikes, or to enjoy what one does not find profitable, or even intelligible. If a reader is not honest and sincere in this matter, there is small hope for him. The lowest taste may be cultivated and improved, and radically changed; but pretence and artificiality can never grow into anything better. They must be wholly rooted out at the start. If you dislike Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and greatly enjoy a trashy story, say so with sincerity and sorrow, if occasion requires, and hope and work for a reversal of your taste. "It's guid to be honest and true," says Burns, and nowhere is honesty more needed than here. . . .

In general terms, one has passed the proper limit of reading when he reads without sufficient apprehension, and understanding, and prom-

The Pleasures of Literature	127
<p>ise of retention in memory, of the page before him, whether it be novel or history, humorous poem or didactic verse. "Reading with me incites to reflection instantly," says Mr. Beecher; "I cannot separate the origination of ideas from the reception of ideas; the consequence is, as I read, I always begin to think in various directions, and that makes my reading slow." Dugald Stewart thus emphasizes this duty of thoughtfulness in reading. "Nothing, in truth, has such a tendency to weaken, not only the powers of invention, but the intellectual powers in general, as a habit of extensive and various reading without reflection. The activity and force of the mind are gradually impaired in consequence of disuse; and, not unfrequently, all our principles and opinions come to be lost in the infinite multiplicity and discordancy of our acquired ideas."</p>	<p><b>The Taste for Reading</b></p> <hr/> <p>C. F. RICHARDSON 1841</p>

Books a  
Refuge  
from the  
Worries of  
Life

—

LORD  
ROSEBURY  
1847

It seems to me that books are the great democratic agent of the world. You hear of many democratic agencies—you have heard, for instance, of the invention of gunpowder, and how it destroyed chivalry and swept away the knights in armour and the aristocracy of war. The invention of gunpowder had that levelling effect on the battles of the Middle Ages. The invention of printing has worked more slowly, but not less effectually. It has worked more slowly because, in the first place, it only brought the learning out of the monasteries in which it was secluded into the palaces of the great. It brought it from the palaces of the great to the central places of learning as they existed in this country; but it has taken a long and a weary time—though that time has now come—to bring it from the central places

<p>The Pleasures of Literature</p>	<p>129</p>
<p>of learning in this country to the homes and hearts of the people. What does that fact mean? It means that the men who possess that literature, whether they give 4<i>d.</i> for the cheapest possible edition, or whether they give £500 for a first edition of which there may be only three copies, are placed on a level, and that this influence, democratizing as I believe it to be, is not democratizing in the sense of leveling, it is democratizing in the sense of elevating. For instance, the man who enjoys Shakespeare—the book for which Tennyson asked on his death-bed—enters a freemasonry to which all the greatest who have lived since Shakespeare belong. He sits down at a banquet to which no rank and no wealth without the necessary qualification — without the necessary wedding-garment—can obtain admittance. And not merely by that is he placed in direct</p>	<p>Books a Refuge from the Worries of Life —</p> <p>LORD ROSEBURY 1847</p>

Books a  
Refuge  
from the  
Worries of  
Life

—

LORD  
ROSEBERY  
1847

relation with the mind of the man who wrote that book, not merely has he an opportunity of endeavouring by his own perception to find out new nooks, new doors, and new paths in this most marvellous production of the Almighty which is called Shakespeare's mind, but he is placed also in communication with those before him, with the great minds of all time who have enjoyed Shakespeare's works. I say, I believe we cannot exaggerate the intellectual freemasonry which the cheapening and diffusing of literature among us has done for our people. It has raised humanity itself, and I believe that that cheapening progress will go on to such an extent that we can hardly foretell what the future of this movement will be. It is not merely that you place yourself in relation with these great minds, but that you have at your hand in a book a refuge

## The Pleasures of Literature

131

from all the worries, all the miseries, all the anxieties of life. You may not have a room to sit in, but if you have a book to read, you have something which may remove you from this life to something better.

**Books a  
Refuge  
from the  
Worries of  
Life**

—

LORD  
ROSEBERY  
1847



132	The Pleasures of Literature
<p data-bbox="169 284 325 423">The Mobility of Books</p> <p data-bbox="211 440 283 466">—</p> <p data-bbox="190 831 304 961">JOHN RUSKIN 1819</p>	<p data-bbox="356 336 967 1499">A COMMON book will often give you much amusement, but it is only a noble book which will give you dear friends. Remember also that it is of less importance to you in your earlier years, that the books you read should be clever than that they should be right. I do not mean oppressively or repulsively instructive; but that the thoughts they express should be just, and the feelings they excite generous. It is not necessary for you to read the wittiest or the most suggestive books; it is better, in general, to hear what is already known, and may be simply said. Much of the literature of the present day, though good to be read by persons of ripe age, has a tendency to agitate rather than confirm, and leaves its readers too frequently in a helpless or hopeless indignation, the worst possible state into which the mind of youth</p>

can be thrown. It may, indeed, become necessary for you, as you advance in life, to set your hand to things that need to be altered in the world, or apply your heart chiefly to what must be pitied in it, or condemned ; but, for a young person, the safest temper is one of reverence, and the safest place one of obscurity. Certainly at present, and perhaps through all your life, your teachers are wisest when they make you content in quiet virtue, and that literature and art are best for you, which point out, in common life and familiar things, the objects for hopeful labour and for humble love.



## The Mobility of Books

—

JOHN  
RUSKIN  
1819

Books as  
Mental  
Nourish-  
ment

—

A. SCHOPEN-  
HAUER  
1788-1860

As regards *reading*, to require that a man shall retain everything he has ever read, is like asking him to carry about with him all he has ever eaten. The one kind of food has given him bodily, and the other mental, nourishment; and it is through these two means that he has grown to be what he is. The body assimilates only that which is like it; and so a man retains in his mind only that which interests him, in other words, that which suits his system of thought or his purposes in life. Every one has purposes, no doubt; but very few have anything like a system of thought. Few people take an objective interest in anything, and so their reading does them no good; they retain nothing.

If a man wants to read good books, he must make a point of avoiding bad ones; for life is short, and time and energy limited.

Any book that is at all important ought to be at once read through, twice ; partly because, on a second reading, the connection of the different portions of the book will be better understood, and the beginning comprehended only when the end is known ; and partly because we are not in the same temper and disposition on both readings. On the second perusal we get a new view of every passage and a different impression of the whole book, which then appears in another light.

It would be a good thing to buy books if one could also buy the time in which to read them ; but generally the purchase of a book is mistaken for the acquisition of its contents.

A man's works are the quintessence of his mind, and even though he may possess very great capacity, they will always be incomparably more valuable than his conversation.

Books as  
Mental  
Nourish-  
ment

—

A. SCHOPEN-  
HAUER  
1788-1860

Books as  
Mental  
Nourish=  
ment  
—

A. SCHOPEN-  
HAUER  
1788-1860

Nay, in all essential matters his works will not only make up for the lack of personal intercourse with him, but they will far surpass it in solid advantages. The writings even of a man of moderate genius may be edifying, worth reading and instructive, because they are his quintessence—the result and fruit of all his thought and study ; whilst conversation with him may be unsatisfactory.

So it is that we can read books by men in whose company we find nothing to please, and that a high degree of culture leads us to seek entertainment almost wholly from books and not from men.



## The Pleasures of Literature

137

BOOKS are both our luxuries and our daily bread. They have become to our lives and happiness prime necessities. They are our trusted favourites, our guardians, our confidential advisers, and the safe consumers of our leisure. They cheer us in poverty, and comfort us in the misery of affluence. They absorb the effervescence of impetuous youth, and while away the tedium of age. You may not teach ignorance to a youth who carries a favourite book in his pocket ; and to a man who masters his appetites a good book is a talisman which insures him against the dangers of overspeed, idleness, and shallowness.



Books our  
Luxuries

—

HENRY  
STEVENS  
1819-1886

**Books the  
Treasured  
Wealth of  
the World**  
—

H. D.  
THOREAU  
1817-1862

No wonder that Alexander carried the *Iliad* with him on his expeditions in a precious casket. A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips;—not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself. The symbol of an ancient man's thought becomes a modern man's speech. Two thousand summers have imparted to the monuments of Grecian literature, as to her marbles, only a maturer golden and autumnal tint, for they have carried their own serene and celestial atmosphere into all lands to protect them against the corrosion of time. Books are the treasured

wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations. Books, the oldest and the best, stand naturally and rightfully on the shelves of every cottage. They have no cause of their own to plead, but while they enlighten and sustain the reader, his common-sense will not refuse them. Their authors are natural and irresistible aristocracy in every society, and, more than kings or emperors, exert an influence on mankind.



Books the  
Treasured  
Wealth of  
the World

—

H. D.  
THOREAU  
1817-1862



# INDEX.

---

- ADVANTAGES of Literature, The, *G. J. Goschen*, 74  
Art of Reading, The, *I. D'Israeli*, 60
- Benefits of Books, The, *R. W. Emerson*, 64  
Books a Blessing in Youth and Age, *J. Collier*, 54  
Books a Portion of the Eternal Mind, *Lord Houghton*,  
90  
Books are always with us, *J. A. Langford*, 97.  
Books a Refuge from the Worries of Life, *Lord Rose-  
bery*, 128  
Books as Mental Nourishment, *A. Schopenhauer*, 134  
Books as Ships of Thought, *Theodore Parker*, 120  
Books Better than Preachers, *R. Baxter*, 37  
Books Good Counsellors, *Ben Jonson*, 94  
Books Legacies to Mankind, *J. Addison*, 25  
Books not Dead Things, *John Milton*, 114  
Books our Instructors, *Bishop Aungerville*, 30  
Books our Luxuries, *H. Stevens*, 139  
Books the Best Companions, *F. Beaumont and J.  
Fletcher*, 42  
Books the Depositories of Mighty Intellects, *Dr.  
Chapin*, 51  
Books the Great Equalizers, *Lord Beaconsfield*, 40  
Books the Greatest Decoration, *J. Bright*, 43  
Books the Knowledge of the Wise, *Dean Farrar*, 65  
Books the Treasured Wealth of the World, *H. D.  
Thoreau*, 138  
Books the True Levellers, *W. E. Channing*, 49
- Charm of Books, The, *T. Hood*, 89  
Consulting Room of the Wise, The, *G. Dawson*, 56  
Cultivation of Reading, The, *Lord Mahon*, 109

Cultivation of the Intellect, The, *Lord Lytton (Owen Meredith)*, 105

Delight of Books, The, *R. Bury*, 57

Fashion in Reading, *W. Hazlitt*, 80

Friendship of Books, The, *F. Petrarch*, 123

Good Books are like Fruit Trees, *S. T. Coleridge*, 53

Gratification of Books, *W. Godwin*, 71

Greatness of English Literature, The, *S. Lee*, 99

How to Read, *Francis Bacon*, 31

How to Read a Good Book, *John Morley*, 116

Leisure and Pleasure of Books, The, *O. W. Holmes*, 88

Love of Books, The, *J. H. Friswell*, 68

Mind Furnished by Reading, The, *J. Locke*, 101

New Books are New Friends, *O. Goldsmith*, 73

Nobility of Books, The, *John Ruskin*, 132

Objects of Reading, The, *A. Helps*, 83

Old Books should be Re-read, *Mark Pattison*, 121

On the Choice of Books, *Rev. J. R. Miller*, 112

Pleasures of Literature, The, *A. J. Balfour*, 32

Poetry in Literature, *W. Irving*, 92

Power of Culture, The, *Matthew Arnold*, 27

Power of Literature, The, *Lord Macaulay*, 106

Purest Embodiment of Thought, The, *T. Carlyle*, 47

Purposeless Reading, *Lord Lytton*, 104

Reading and Thinking, *A. Cameron*, 46

Reading and Thinking, *Thomas Arnold*, 28

- Satisfaction of Literature, The, *De Genlis*, 59  
Society of Books, The, *W. E. Gladstone*, 69  
  
Taste for Books and Reading, *A. J. Herschel*, 87  
Taste for Reading, The, *C. F. Richardson*, 125  
Thirst for Books, The, *Lord Macaulay*, 108  
Thoughts in an Old Library, *C. Lamb*, 96  
True Lover of Literature, The, *Earl of Iddesleigh*, 91  
  
Universality of Books, The, *Sir J. Lubbock*, 102  
Universality of Literature, The, *T. F. Bayard*, 39  
  
What Class of Book to Read, *F. Harrison*, 77  
Wonderful Character of Books, The, *C. Kingsley*, 95





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